CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Project Palm Desert Historical Society

INTERVIEWEE: Nina Schumway OH 1

INTERVIEWER: Minnie Surles

SUBJECT: Oral History Project of College of the Desert

DATE: May 23, 1979, 9:20 a.m. (approx)

TRANSCRIBER: Dana Forrester

MS: And first, Nina, I thought perhaps you could tell me just...we'll start off with just a little bit about your family history such as where you were born and who your parents were?

NS: Yes, that will be good. I am glad to have that. I was born in a little town in Nebraska called Whitefield and lived there in different Nebraska cities until I was about six year old. On account of my father being a salesman of the new, large farm machinery that was just coming out, we moved from city to city as his field was changed by his employers, and then we moved to Kansas City, Missouri, where I started school. That was at the age of seven years. I was seven when I started school. And I therefore claim (chuckle) my sort of fellowship with my ideal author, Willa Cather, who...well, it's quoted in my new chapter on the living desert where they asked me about the author and what I wrote is enough about the author, and then I tell about my feeling for Willa Cather.

So, I have loved her writing. It is clear, beautiful and full of wonderful, perceptive...

MS: You began to read that when you were very young. And this was in Nebraska?

NS: Yes, this was in Nebraska.

MS: When you were

NS: No, I just claim her because of this, this kinship. So, then we lived in Kansas City for a short time, only I guess about a year and a half. My memory of it is very (microphone interference)...because we did move so much. And each winter from the time I was about six weeks old we went to my grandmother's in Louisiana and spent the winters because my mother never liked the cold winters and she thought we were prone to colds and things, my brother and I. So, being a very devoted mother, she... and always wanting to see her mother...we were quite closely knit, and her family name was Howard, Nettie Howard. My father was a...the Howards were pioneers from New York State who had immigrated to Nebraska when it was a frontier state. And my father's people came from Sweden to this country and settled with a band of settlers from Sweden in a little town in Illinois. And Howardsville, my mother's home, birthplace and where my grandfather had settled and that it was named and it was just a kind of spot on the road, an aggragation of farms; like we'd say a farming center sort of today, but it was named Howardsville and it was close to Galena? Lena, Illinois,

which is the closest sizeable town. I went there once when I was a small girl about ten years old, and my mother and father took a trip (he was on a selling trip) and they took me and I got to visit the old schoolhouse where my mother went to school, the old country school, and they would raise their hands and say "may I pass the dipper please?" (laughter).

MF: Now, this is your mother's background?

NS: This is in Illinois and it was just a...oh it was just...

MS: Now, it was just the two children, you and your brother?

NS: Just the two of us, yes, my brother and I.

MS: And you brother's name was...?

NS: And my brother passed quite early. He passed here in California after my father.

MS: What was his name?

NS: Lawrence.

MS: And you called him a nickname?

NS: We always called him Lorrie, L-o-r-r-i-e. And one of my great nieces now, his grandchild, see, would be, they called her L-a-u-r-i-e. She lives in Kingman, Arizona.

MS: Before you came to the valley here you lived in Oregon with your parents, right?

NS: Well, we lived in Oregon. When my father bought land that was real wilderness .

MS: Well, let's go back now and when you were living in Oregon because that was just prior to coming. Let's

go back to why you came. Why did your father decide to come?

NS: To grow dates. He had seen an article in the magazine, he cut it out (this was in Chicago)...

MS: That's right, it was in Chicago.

NS: ...and he had carried that around in his wallet until it just fell to dust, and it was the...I am the concerned date growing in the old world in white it said that the Arab could live two families on a single date palm. They could be their entire subsistence. They ate the fruit, the camels ate the seeds. The used the dead fronds and the spine of the dead frond for building purposes, for huts and furniture, and they could subsist on the single palm, two families.

MS: This fascinated your father?

NS: So, he thought that was the most wonderful thing he had ever heard of. And the consequence of it was his interest in dates so that when he went through the valley on his way to Arizona where he had invested in a little gold thing out of Forksight , Florence Mining Company (I don't know if it ever exists now), but anyway, I think he just went down to look into it and he heard on the train (someone told him as they went through) that the government had started experiments with the date palm in this country. They felt that it was precisely the climate that would grow the best dates, which were only produced in the oasis of the deserts

and that this was a typical oasis.

MS: So, when he went back, did he convince your mother that you were coming?

NS: No. He bought this land out there, I think unsight and unseen, but it was out in the desert out of Coachella.

MS: About three or four miles?

NS: About five or six miles. About equally distant from Coachella and Indio. But there was a meandering track most of the way out from Coachella, whereas there was none for quite a many years to Indio. That road was put in later. That I tell about in the book too.

MS: Would you also tell us about the trip on the Sidewinder when you came on the train? What you recollect of that?

NS: I recollect chiefly the hot, dusty plush seats that when we began to get down below the pass and warm up because it was June (and why we chose June shows the ignorance of the usual pioneer (laughter) those days). But anyway, I quote from the Peanut Butcher largely on the topic of the temperature. And then, of course, when we landed and got off the train, The Sidewinder, which was a...well it was an accommodation train, called, and it went from Los Angeles down to a certain part of Imperial. But it didn't go out to where the towns are now. This was a great train for the people of the valley. We always used it, and the Sidewinder motion (that's why they named it that (chuckle) because it was rather unsteady and swerved around and it was small, it

was short. It had just a few cars on it.

MS: What were your thoughts when you first got off Coachella?

NS: Well, we couldn't think, we couldn't think. They had changed a sudden...although the train was hot, the stepping out into the full blaze of a late June sun was so overpowering and the sight that we saw of Coachella was also equally overpowering (chuckle) that we just stood there sort of dazed. And the decent, the rapid decent, from the pass to this subelevation caused our hearing to fail us temporarily.

MS: What was there when you got off of the train, actually at the site?

NS: Mustard colored depot that the trains always...that Southern Pacific always built in those days, and across the stretch of sand which was ostensibly a road full of wheel tracks and no defined road but just wheel tracks right paralleling the track; and then going south which was the main street of the town and it was really the town at that time for the people to live, Indio was at this period a railroad center only with a few houses right around the property. Oh, they had a railroad...

MS: There was more to Mecca and Thermal wasn't there really though than Indio?

NS: Mecca was the very first town. There wasn't much to it as a town. Thermal was poor because of the water being close to the surface. Thermal developed earlier than the other.

MS: They had a kind of Ice plant too there didn't they?

NS: Well, all the ice plant was at Coachella.

MS: At Coachella?

NS: And the first electric plant was there too.

MS: At Coachella?

NS: Yes.

MS: Coachella was originally called something else though, wasn't it?

NS: Well, that would be still earlier.

MS: Earlier than when you came?

NS: That's when the engines of the Southern Pacific burned wood. They burned mesquite and there were great forests of mesquite around Coachella which proved, of course, that the soil was excellent. And they had woodcutters there and loaded...they had sidelines to load the cars with this wood that they cut, and that was why it was named Woodsbur...

MS: ...before it was named Coachella?

NS: First it was that before it was named Coachella. And there was, of course, two opinions about the name 'Coachella'. Some think it came...was derived from the word Cowea, and it was written into Washington illegibly or misspelled someway. Some thought it was named for the little shell, cochlea, that littered the desert in those days. And out in our district, which was called the Coral Reef District, was a great...wherever there was a stretch of hard

pam , this would be littered with these little white shells. We used to sweep them up to give to the chickens for their lime, you know, you feed chickens lime for the eggs.

MS: Yes, sure, right. Actually, the deposit on the soil was not coral, it was just named that, wasn't it?

NS: That was not coral, no, not at all it was just given that name, they called it coral in those days and there was a great water line all along that.

MS: Still visible?

NS: Yes. And at down at what we used to call 'Indian Head' where the rocks are coated with it also, well all along that shore line.

MS: Well, here you were a young girl, not many young girls in that area, not many women in that area...

NS: Oh, no women would stay. That old jest about...they started to talk about this when we first got there and this was the saying: "Soon be too hot for women and flies", but believe me at our time were as foolish as we were because they were so thick there at Pete's Restaurant where we ate that we fortunately found...

MS: Was that a large restaurant just for the workers, or what was this like?

NS: It was a very small place much like the inside of a barn, a little barn, and long tables that the men ate at there. There were no other women and mother and I felt being somewhere near the Victorian Age, we were terribly

embarrassed and the men, I think, were equally embarrassed by our presence because they acted...looked right down at their plates, all around us and ducked their heads to speak. We were in what we call sweatshirts today and most of them unshaven and they did not in those days ~~where~~ EAR beards and they did cut their hair, but this was done probably three times a week.

MS: When you first arrived there was nothing out on your property to live in.

NS: Nothing.

MS: You lived in town?

NS: We found a bungalow, , and a Washatonia palm grew there. That later was burned. But there were two of these bungalows, side by side.

MS: Can you still identify that place, that area, when you go there?

NS: I doubt it. I doubt it. It's also entirely gone. That house burned. I don't know whether the other bungalow... but they had grass. They had a little lawn around. This was green and this palm was green in the midst of this . And across the street was what everybody spoke of as the park, although nothing grew there, but the tumbleweeds rolled around and dust blew, sand blew. But it was a park and it later was made into a park.

MS: Then did you begin to develop out on the ranch? Did you begin to...

NS: We started to develop out there...we drove out first, of course, to see the land and we encountered on our road one ranch where they had dug out water.

MS: So you knew it was possible? Encouraged your father.

NS: My father always had a sense of, I call it inner guilt perhaps for having brought my mother to such a place, which everybody spoke of the desert as 'God forsaken'. They never spoke of the desert as beautiful. No one every saw any beauty in the desert until, I think, I came, I really do. Mother and I saw beauty, but this was later. At first we didn't see beauty in Coachella, and this little house that we rented had one bedroom only but it had quite a big sleeping porch, screened.

MS: Screened, of course.

NS: And that we put extra beds on. We had moved out our furniture from Oregon and my driving horse, Roney, that my father had given me for a Christmas in Oregon, and a nice red-wheeled, rubber-tired buggy that had a kind of an umbrella that you could, it was on an Iron Rod, you could put it in the socket and then raise this and it all projected frontward instead of being round, it was projected out over the buggy and it was on the back of the seat. And it had a fringe around it. That was popular so that I always had that very nice turnout. And Roney, my horse, was a fast trotter. She was a good horse but she was a little skiddish with my brother when he drove.

MS: Now did you have to go into the town of Coachella then for most of your supplies?

NS: Well, when we got across there, there was Mike's store in which there was a corner for the post office, and there was this other place on the corner which was Pete's Restaurant. And I suppose there must have been some other shacky buildings, but I can't seem to remember anything except crossing this expanse of sand that came in over the tops of our shoes and we plodded through it over to Pete's. We saw the word restaurant and we plodded over there, headed for there, and there were beds out on the sleeping ~~porch~~. It had no rooms, but it had sleeping proches with screens, and you slept right on the street in those beds which was terribly embarrassing.

MS: Embarrassing, but it was safe, wasn't it?

NS: Oh, safe, you'd be safe. We didn't even have any keys at the ranch where they were. Of course, after we built...and the Sheridan Lumber Company, which my father had invested in when we went to Oregon, was where we got the material for our house.

MS: You had no wells, of course, when you first got there?

NS: Not at first. We started the well but it took Elon Proctor and his son, Ivan, over a year to dig this well.

MS: So, how did you get your water?

NS: Well, we didn't move until we thought it was going to be done, but he didn't get it done. And, so, we hauled it in a barrel at first after we got the house out there in

the sand and moved into it (side 2)...I had my little cabin under and I picture for that and living there.

MS: Tell me about that little cabin. You had a separate little cabin?

NS: This was way many, many years later.

MS: Later, Yes, we'll talk about that then later.

NS: Now, we had the old ranchhouse and I want to show you the picture of the living room. We built it...

MS: Describe it for me, the living room. Describe it for me.

NS: Well, it was a large, comparatively large for those days--we didn't build such large rooms--but it was (blank stretch in tape)... or any of those things that are commonly now necessities. So, that we just sweat it out.

MS: Literally.

NS: Literally sweat it out. And the word perspiration is entirely inadequate. We never used it at all. It was so foolish to say perspire when you were just drenched and dripping. And when mother and I would try to get ready to go to town and try to look as we felt we should look to go to town, it was the most dreadful penalty we had to pay because the way we built this house was each... my husband and I and my mother and father put in equal parts and we built the house together and built a common living room with a small dining room on either side of it because Harry and I had the furniture that we had had in Oregon in our little house, the first little house we

had, and we had been only married a short time so that when we moved out we had this what was called 'misha' furniture in those days, dark colored, rather cheap because we didn't have enough to buy anything but rather cheap.

MS: But it was really a way of trying to...a young couple and an older couple sharing?

NS: And then the accepted architecture of that day on the desert was to build a big sleeping porch clear around the house except right at the back. There we put on each side a kind of large entrance with a cupboard in it and screened shelves in the cupboard to put the milk pans because we, of course, bought a cow right away. And all the horses/that we bought aside from we had Roney, but we had to buy a work team and we bought those... there was what was called--I have to look it on my own book, so often --but this was a place where it was named Griffin's Corral and he bought all kinds of wagons, horses, mules and even cattle for sale. That's where our cow, we would look around among the ranchers.

MS: What kind of entertainment was there for the young people when you first got there?

NS: Nothing at the very first, but very soon there was dancing.

MS: In the summertime they just didn't try to do anything.

NS: No. They had what they called a party and it was called a watermelon party--this I tell about in my book. We

had never ever attended anything like it before and, unfortunately, I had worn some of my trousseau which I clothes I had in the town of Sheridan which was a nice little town and you dressed up. We had dancing there and I loved to dance. I just loved to dance. I had learned to dance years before in Mexico. That's when we came back. We lived in Sheridan. We had dances, they were public dances. But because they were well-chaperoned our parents let us attend.

MS: There wasn't any place to dance in Coachella valley when you first came, was there?

NS: No, the schoolhouse. The schoolhouse.

MS: What did they do at the watermelon feed?

NS: ...but at Thermal they had a hall and there was where the biggest dances were held. And the largest hotel in the valley was in Thermal and it was a frame structure, which later burned. But at midnight they'd put on a perfectly gorgeous supper and everybody went across the street from the hall where we danced, which was very full of drafts. The babies were all parked in the corner on quilts and nursed in-between times by the mothers, and then we , of course they were only in the wintertime. We didn't try to dance in the summer.

MS: Everybody brought food to these?

NS: bring food because this beautiful dinner was served . I don't remember if it was a $1.50, but it

was just...almost nothing compared. Oh, it was a feast, a beautiful feast. And we would all go over there and eat dinner and it was...there we could leave the babies in the hall on their quilts asleep.

MS: Nothing to fear because everyone knew one another.

NS: Everybody knew and everybody cooperated with everybody. And so that we had these perfectly and gorgeous times, and my sister-in-law that played and my brother played the clarinet.

MS: And you played something at one time, or was that for your own amusement?

NS: No. I was a dancer.

MS: Was that an ocarina? What did you play?

NS: I never played anything. I'm not a bit musical.

MS: Did you play something for your own...or was that your brother?

NS: That was my brother. He was musical, not I. And I like music but I have no knowledge of it at all. I'm not musical, I have no voice. The other children in the family like my mother had a good voice. She was very very musical. All the Howards were musical.

MS: Was there a church at that time?

NS: Yes, there was a church.

MS: Now, all denominations went to the same church?

NS: Everybody went.

MS: Now, we're going to get back to the watermelon party.

NS: I think that the watermelon party was the first festivity

that we attended, and they had a huge crop of watermelons that year and the market went down because there was so many. It was flooded with watermelons. So, they were delicious watermelons. I've never tasted such watermelons as they were. In fact, I hadn't been fond of watermelon in Chicago or anywhere because it was never like these, so sweet and juicy. And we ate all the watermelon we could. It was given at a ranch, the party was, and everybody that I knew out of all the four towns was there; and a very few women, largely men. And after they'd eaten their fill, why some of them began a rowdy business of cutting the melons because they were worthless in the market and cutting the melons and throwing the pulp at each other, or using it like snowballs to wash their faces. Well, of course, it was sticky and I had on a nice dress and I was terrified that they would start to throw watermelon at me, wash my face and ruin my clothes. All the other women had just worn/common house dresses, wash dresses, but I didn't understand what I should have worn so that I was dressed for a party, because that's what they had said, a watermelon party, which meant to me they would serve watermelon. And it got rowdier and rowdier and the more they did it, the women would scream and howl with their faces all dripping with juice, and the men would wrestle with each other and it was just an awful rowdy thing. So, I said to my husband, and I said let's go

home. And so we made our adieus with proper thanks to the host and hostess and went home before it went any further. So, I don't remember that I ruined that garment.

MS: A watermelon fight rather than a watermelon party, that was for sure.

NS: This is what I thought and I was very snippy about things (chuckle). I thought, 'well if this is their idea of society and social gatherings, I don't want anymore of it'. I had never lived really in the country. We had always been more or less city people except in this little town of Hammond where we visited my grandmother, and this was my delight. Hammond was my joy and we went down there for the first time when I was only six weeks old.

MS: But very different from your watermelon party in Coachella? Nothing like that?

NS: My grandmother was a great reader and my mother was a great reader. My earliest memory is of my mother reading to us, and I guess her earliest memory was her mother's reading. That's why those days in Howardsville when they had a ranch...

MS: For a refined young lady to suddenly come to a place like Coachella, that was an experience.

NS: Well, my mother (end of this interview)

June 6, 1979, Nina Paul Schumway's house, Interview continuation

MS: This morning we're going to talk about a few of the

people that Nina knew many years ago. And I'm going to ask you this morning, Nina, to talk about Big Tree John for us. Just tell us a little something about him. What tribe was he with, that's a good place to begin?

NS: What tribe? He was a Cowea, which was disputed. They called him an Apache because he was an unusual type of Cowean, but he was just an unusual being of any type. And actual fact was , which was considered his domain, was in jeopardy from the Whites and his fear that his last possession, last stand, was going to be encroached upon and taken away from him by the Whites obsessed him. And he made a great pretense of savagery and carried a gun and would sometimes aim it at people. The first time I saw Big Tree was at the first Christmas celebration in Coachella.

MS: About what year?

NS: This was the Christmas of 1909. We had arrived in June. This was the following Christmas and it was our first Indian celebration and was to be that day along with the other races and things which they did on Christmas as we do have it on the Fourth of July with toys and games and a ballgame in the afternoon. Indians and Whites against each other. But the Indians were there in and mostly they rode in on horses. There were some rigs too with the families in them with children. And the headquarters was then what they called the park which

. And downtown on the corner near Mike's store they were to hold a Bar-B-Que at noon and everybody was gathered there. We had guests, parts of the family, from Sierra Madre and all who were down visiting us, and this managed to be quite a big crowd of people lined up for the Bar-B-Que. And someone in the crowd said in rather an excited tone, "here comes Big Tree John". Big Tree, of course, was present at all celebrations in his attire

and an Army coat, blue with brass buttons, and pictures everywhere used. This was the introduction to the article in the Desert Magazine asked me if I would write the story of Big Tree John, which had been a supposedly in a very successful novel by a new writer and this novel established his name and fame and proved to be a living thing widow of the writer is still living. And it had had the approval of the academic world and their approval of

MS: But you objected to the book yourself?

NS: I sent to Randall...I wrote right the story of Big Tree had been dead a number of years. His son Johnny Mann was still living and I said I would write the story for Desert Magazine if they will let me discredit the work of this author who has so misrepresented one of

our characters here in the valley to whom the old pioneer society were just about to put on a plaque on a gold and they were going to put it right there by Indian Wells right close to where the Whitewater ditch later came through and this great boulder that they mounted the plaque, on Big Tree John, was washed away eventually in one of the bad floods that we had many of. At this time Big Tree was a character that everybody was tremendously interested in and he was known all over Southern California because of his objections to the White people coming in and his land, of which he considered himself to be the chief, was right close to the railroad. And he felt that he was always in danger. The railroad had so far protected him and they had allowed him some privileges even, like riding on the open train for free, and they had let him take ties that were discarded. He had sold them among the ranchers for fence posts. So many people had split-ties for fence posts. That way Big Tree John had earned a little money. He was much more interested in money than most.

MS: He was an entrepreneur, yes. But you didn't know if he had ever physically harmed anybody?

NS: Never. Never. But he would enter a house without knocking. He was primitive but he was not a savage. And the hero, as we might call him, of this novel was a pattern of what I would have to say

was a degenerate in character. And as he presented him, he was an Apache Indian from Arizona, and I don't know anything about the Apache philosophies or character except, of course, the knowledge that Cochise was an Apache, who was a very fine Indian, and it was only his betrayal that caused him to raid the White people finally.

MS: Then what you resented was that they were trying to fictionalize a man who you felt was probably an eccentric and also very much probably deluded at times?

NS: Well, he was a valley character and the desert attracts odd characters, and we have many oddities. I expect that we all were somewhat might be thought of as oddities.

MS: Could you kind of then sum up Big Tree John for us? Sum up for us what you would say about him then. I think you've said it really on the tape.

NS: Well, in this day of the world, at large the readers of this man have a complete misconception of a harmless, primitive who was in fear of losing his domain and his prestige as a chief (microphone interference)

Palm Desert, the first time I ever heard of it.

MS: You were living then on the ranch or up on the hill?

NS: We lived only seven months out of the year on the mountain, and I always wintered in the

MS: How did you find out about Randall Henderson?

NS: We had known Randall, my husband and I, for some years, and he had written to us from..he was, of course, at this time publishing a magazine . And he had written us that he would like to have a piece of land on which he might build a cabin to go to in the hot weather back in . And he understood that we were buying a piece of property up on the high Santa Rosa ridge. In fact, we did start to do this in the high, wooded country where the big pines were, but after, and we were buying and we had made only one or two payments and then we realized, well after my father's passing when we had to take over the ranch, we found that we would never be given to go up there to stay long. To make the trip would be so bad on the road, it was very bad.

MS: Now, you are talking about going up to Santa Rosa.

NS: To the top. To El Toro from Santa Rosa. And these were it was a section. And we would later we sold this to a relative after we had quite a lot ownership in it.

MS: Now, was this what Randall was interested in?

NS: He would like to have had the cabin. So then, when Steve wrote him that we were no longer interested up there. Well, at that time sold it to a relative, but we told him we found that it was not feasible to have a a cabin or place so far from town so that we could not

sell him or lease him a piece of land for him.

MS: But at that time you weren't writing or he didn't know you in any literary way?

NS: He only knew me because when..later then when he did this time, he had not

MS: He's still in El Centro?

NS: He's still in El Centro Magazine and I to write for the magazine while he was still at El Centro. And of course, remained in El Centro until after the second World War. When my husband passed in February of 1945...

MS: Your husband, Steve?

NS: My husband, Steve. And we knew Randall by this time and because we had by him and he came up to the mountain after we were

MS: What was he like?

NS: He was very likeable and very intelligent and very forthright. And we had some differences of opinion but I was always very fond of him and admired him and just the type of person that we would like to know. And so when I heard from him he was going to publish a magazine and in the newspaper business many years his editor in the story of his life. So when he decided to publish a magazine, he told us about it and what it would be like. My husband who

liked to keep our relatives
he was very divided on this because he didn't want
because I was the writer to some extent
and had some success in magazine writing, he
that we would have a magazine in our
that I wanted to write for. I wanted to do both.

NS: Do you remember, Nina, what your first piece was you ever submitted to Desert Magazine?

NS: Oh, yes, I remember.

MS: What was the story about?

NS: It was a poem.

MS: A poem? About the Desert?

NS: . And this was illustrated with a beautiful picture by an Imperial Valley photographer who did a great many of the magazine pictures. Very fine work. And this was a picture of raw desert. The first issue of Desert Magazine contained a poem by Willa Cather. And the second issue contained my poem, , with this illustration and Mrs. Cather's had an illustration. Her's had the native palm and mine had the raw desert picture. Illustrates the . And the man who had given , he always welcomed poetry. He always put an article in the magazines . He didn't a poetry page, that if the poet wanted to hear him, because he said, desert scenes inspire people to poem, poetize. Why he would always carry this poetry...

MS: So, your first thing you weren't paid for?

NS: This would not be paid for. So then, I continued to write some

TAPE 2

MS: When he moved to El Centro to Palm Desert was it into the building that stands now as the Desert Museum or did he move into a smaller building?

NS: No, he moved into the larger. He needed more space They came. They the fishes about every Thursday but I was too busy feeding pigs and raising pine dates to spend much time on the typewriter.

MS: But then you did continue to write. Were you at the dedication at the nice, new, beautiful museum that was there in Palm Desert that used to have the Desert Magazine offices in it?

NS: Well, I was a...the story that ran in relation to Palm Desert was I happened to be a part of it because I became a in the new Desert Magazine and after it for ten years.

MS: the desert in your interest in his work?

NS: No. He offered me...he said I am And the first person that I was to talk to when and because I felt but Randall had lost his . So it was his with the magazine and he

He so loved his son. His son was to him just what Steve was to me. No individual on earth that was beloved beyond . And so, when he telephoned me...well, in the first place, he wrote me a letter. He had seen the about Steve's passing in the newspaper and he had immediately written the most sympathetic letter and reported that he too had lost one of his most beloved in this world and could fully sympathize with me. And then he telephoned one day and I was in the process of moving away from the old ranch to some winter quarters that had been offered me on the Woodhouse ranch, the Burt Woodhouse Ranch.

MS: Where was that, Nina?

NS: It was about six miles from our place and they had a grapefruit ranch. And then Burt was a painter and decorator, but more than that, he was an artist and he later made the furniture out of tamarisk wood. He invented... it took him twenty-one years to find a way that tamarisk wood could be cured so that it didn't split and crack when it was dry. And then he and his son, Dale, manufactured furniture or a small thing first. First they made bowls and . I wrote an article for the Desert Magazine, 'Bolts and Bowls by Woodhouse'.

MS: Then you had been invited to come and live?

NS: They had offered me a single room, it had been a bedroom, detached from the house, built for Katherine Woodhouse's elderly uncle who had lived in Pomona. And as he grew

more aged, he wanted to live in the main house. They had a very large, house. And this was detached just across the patio from their larger home, and they had offered me that for a winter sanctuary when I was living in the desert and had offered if I would pay my rent ahead--my rent of twenty-five dollars a month--if I would pay it ahead, Burt would build on a dressing room and bathroom. And then I had a little trailer house as we called them then--we didn't call them mobile.

MS: They were trailer houses, right.

NS: This little trailer house and Steve had bought one in anticipation of trip we were going to take where we would go to as far as the road would permit and then we would put our belongings in the trailer, lock them up and explore.

MS: That was marvelous. Well, now, let's get back to Randall's days. He moved. Steve had died.

NS: Then Randall phoned and said would I talk to him, but it might become a . He was in the vicinity that day and there was something he wanted to talk to me about. And I was moving . The house was dusty and I was hesitant, but he seemed to be anxious and because of this friendship that I had for him, his sympathy--my husband and I had met his little Randall and he was a beautiful boy and just the type

so I sent Randall in and after we talked some time he told me of a meeting he had had. See Randall was an air force officer and his brother, Phil, also was an air force officer and they had met in Africa and had talked about the idea of having a new community in the desert and Randall was already exploring the possibility of finding a larger and a more promising place for the magazine because there there was no railroad and it was in those days a long way over some bad roads and more it was a move. And he felt that the magazine that was more accessible to more tourists would be much more successful.

MS: Did you believe in it when you first talked with him? When he came to see you?

NS: Well, I believed in it because I was already in the of the magazine as published down there and also contributed.

MS: And you felt this was a logical move?

NS: It seemed to me that it was but, of course, there was also the but exploitations of...

MS: So you had mixed emotions?

NS: ...bring in a lot of people and ruin our wilderness. And even in those days I was very interested in the idea of the magazine and then they would buy a piece of the land, you see, and just what there would be would depend entirely to the establishment of the subdivision. But Randall would build-up the magazine, the printing press and put

in it .

At that time the magazine was being printed in Los Angeles and gathered and mailed in El Centro and that would continue for a time. But ultimately we would have a press of our own and put out his own magazine and everything right in the building.

MS: Do you think he felt he had accomplished what he had set out to do with his magazine?

NS: Oh, he did indeed. I'm not sure but it became of course...he proved...However, since all magazines are paid for by their advertising, then their other , they grew slowly, and to pay very much for any other article was impossible because they might alter advertising. Then Randall had offered and said, "I felt that you would be interested and it might add something to your life and we are going to find a way in and come up here and reinforce had been owned by the employees, Beth Stacey and her sister and Lucille Waite and ~~Dan~~ Randall's daughter helped with /

During the four years, they carried in the editorial office all through the war years while Randall was first overseas, so that when he came back things were still going extremely well. They had done a splendid job, but Randall had said that .

They didn't have room for anything and he wanted to spread out to a bigger business. And they were going to

reincorporate and issues large amounts of stock so that everybody could invest more money in it if they wished. He had reserved a substantial block of stock for me if I would like to invest in it.

MS: And did you do that?

NS: I did, yes. I put in about nine thousand dollars, nine thousand dollars, in stock.

MS: So, your relationship with Randall Hennesey Iverson continued through the years to be a very strong one?

NS: Very strong. This was before here and Randall used to come up to...well, it was in the end when Steve used to come up there and he often came up and was very delighted with the . And, in fact, when he had set that time to come up and take the pictures for one of the articles about our homestead that I had written briefly and I called it "hardrock homesteaders" and he had liked the very much. Steve had sent him pictures but either he really wasn't satisfied or he wanted to do it himself like to come up and take the pictures. And when he left that day, he said to Steve and I, "you two have the best chance of happiness of any two people I know".

MS: Remember the first time, Nina, when you met Nellie Kaufman?

NS: I do indeed.

MS: Tell me about it.

NS: I had tried to start out at our ranch after my father's death and Steve and I had the ranch on our hands...

MS: What year would this be Nina?

NS: 1935.

MS: 1935.

NS: And we had for our choice dates, and we had grapefruit drawing people . So I had the idea of starting a sort of a museum in a part of our date house where there was an office and quite a lot of room. It also had a cold storage plant and then had the receiving platform, a cleaning area for taking care of the dates and a room for finishing and ripening on those that had some that weren't quite ripe. And it was quite a roomy place. And I had the idea of hanging the pictures of the very earliest that had started in the date industry.

MS: To make a museum?

NS: To make a sort of a museum. Then I was writing a little thing that was advertising...

MS: Like a pamphlet?

NS: Called a pamphlet, called the Desert Datagram--I just wrote it now and again. Then I had a little sketch at the beginning that was so much constant work on the roads when my father was getting the date industry started. So I made this all into kind of a story and had the pictures of all these things, and , and we had a very remarkable from the King of Egypt at this time. My father who was very much of an advertiser and a very good salesman had

a fine desert pack a was redwood box with the word or the letter burned in on the lid...

MS: And Nellie Kaufman had seen this?

NS: ...and it was beautiful inside, gold sealed put under there on it and it was shaped like a heart, that's for the heart of the desert.

MS: Really sounds

NS: And it was a very handsome and my brother and I had gone ahead and sent one of these to King when we had a King of Egypt then and we sent it. And we got a wonderful letter from the King of Egypt, his secretary but he had signed it, in which he said in his own way that if we had a date right there, if we could grow a date like that in our country, we had it made. Now, he didn't say that in plain words.

And so this was a great museum with a lot of other wonderful things, pictures of when Art Johnson, who had gone over for the date industry, and I knew that Art Johnson...

MS: Okay, we'll talk about the date industry later.

NS: ...so I had some of his writings in there too. He would write in green and black or red ink according to the importance of what he had to say, so it was very colorful as well as interesting. And I had post cards that he had sent me through my father and certain other pictures.

I had a picture of a Dr. that we had had at the ... he had given my father in San Francisco at the Exposition

at the 1915 Exposition.

MS: Well, now, I want to get back to Nellie.

NS: So...you wondered about what?

MS: I want to get back to how Nellie got acquainted with you, Nellie Kaufman.

NS: Well, that was the part of my museum. I had this literature all printed and all, nicely done by a local printer, and then I wrote or telephoned--I can't remember which I did--to Mrs. Kaufman whom I only knew at that time in 1935 by the newspapers. The roads between here and Palm Springs, or between Palm Desert and Palm Springs, were so atrocious it was a real trip and it was an awful trip. So, we didn't make it and only when we would come down and maybe stop at the Desert Inn, which was a mere tent-house and a little place on the corner where the people had the dining room and the office. And so I had stop there once and had dinner in route to the ranch...

MS: That's all you knew...

NS: around Riverside. But I had no known Mrs. Kaufman, just seen her and then read about her in the paper which used to call Palm Springs our desert garden and I had only heard of her. So then I, of course, knew how it had changed and what a wonderful place the Inn was and I had written her or phoned her about my new museum on the ranch and how this was sort of a pioneer effort to draw people out to the ranches and off the highway and to see what a date business. I would show them through the

whole thing, the cleaning of the dates and the cold storage plant and tell them all about everything. Well, I drew big crowds, but they were the cheapest crowds that I ever had. They just never bought anything but a few, when they did , a few dates to eat.

MS: Did you get Mrs. Kaufman to come out?

NS: No. I telephoned her and...no, I wrote her and she telephoned me and said "I am tremendously interested in every pioneer effort and I am so interested in what you're trying to do for the date gardens. Will you come and have dinner with me," And she set the date. Well, I had, of course, well I said "yes, oh" I said "I'd be happy to do this". And then, of course, here I am and it was wintertime and I knew that there were guests there that would be all dressed up for dinner and I had just a suit, a wool suit that I had had for years, and a little brown felt hat and I thought 'well, I'll just wear a suit and a hat and I can't do any better so I have to do this'. And Steve took me up in the pick-up and delivered me at the door and left saying he would call for me at a certain time. Well, as I came in the door of the Inn and the doorman brought me in and asked for my name and I said I was with Mrs. Kaufman for dinner and I remember how I felt about crossing that beautiful room that was not ostentatious, it had the aire of home to it. It was just a beautiful home-like place. And I was telling Mrs.

Autry, that my feeling for it--the Gene Autry hotel which is unostentatious--has the atmosphere that I always wanted at the Desert Inn, and when I first told Mrs. Autry that, she through her arms around me and kissed me. She said, "I am so happy to have you say this because I designed the whole thing." And she said, "it just makes me feel good to think that somebody feels this way about it." That's just a little thing...

MS: That's interesting. That's very interesting.

NS: But when Mrs. Kaufman was waiting for me in the lunch area and she came forward as I came in and met me with both hands outstretched and took both my hands and said, "Oh, how good you are to come". And then she was very quitely dressed--she always dressed quietly--and we went in to dinner and I lost all thought of my clothes then because our talk was so interesting and she began to point out the employees there in the dinning room, the head waitress. Everyone who had worked there in the dining room for over ten years which was just because in those days the desert offered people little, employees very little. Then she said after we had quite a little time, she suggested things on the menu in such a way that helped me make a choice. She would say, "I think our chef does this especially well". She would say, I believe our chef does this especially well if you would like so and so, I think that you would enjoy this". So, in that way I made my choice for my dinner and all the

time she was pointing out, telling me stories about the employees, their backgrounds and who they were and putting in little things that were very, very interesting and saying to me then, "I do want to show you our kitchens". She said, "I'm especially proud of our kitchen". And she lead me in through the kitchen. Her chef was the son of the...no, at that time I guess they hadn't changed yet. I guess she still had her old Chinese, a Chinaman had been with her over the years and his understudy was her son.

MS: Certainly speaks well for her.

NS: And he had been with her all these years, then her son had come to take his place as his understudy and everything in that kitchen was so shiney and emaculate, but it was a positively beautiful room. I never lost the feeling of that kitchen and everything, as I say, was so shiney and clean and bright and aluminum was glittering. It was just a magnificent sight. And then she said, "Now let's go in the lounge and you tell me more about your ranch, about your father and about your early times here". "When did you come." And I said, "1909". She said, "That's just the year that I came to get started with the Desert Inn". And she told me about her trip from the railroad out to the desert to where she came to Dr. Murray's establishment, which was sort of a sanitarium. And she told me about that after . And then we talked and then the doorman came back and said that Mr.

Schumway had come for me, and she said "Do tell him to come in, I do so want to meet him". And I said "Well, I'm sure he's in his work clothes and he would be very embarrassed to come in". Then she said, "Then I'll go out to meet him". And so she did, and then, oh, she was so cordial.

MS: Did she get out to see you Nina? Was she ever able to come out and see your...?

NS: She never got to the museum. She never even got to my home in Palm Desert, but she had gotten up to the mountains.

MS: Oh, she did?

NS: Yes. She got up to the . And, in fact, she had showed them a spot where she had expected to build what she called 'my hideaway' and it is the same place where Frances Rich now has her studio. It was Mrs. Kaufman's hideaway to be her's and very unusually beautiful view right up over grapevine creek and looking out over the whole valley. And she said I just want a place where I can come because as she would enter our living room there, she would always sit down in the chair and look out over the valley which had a great stretch of window towards the desert and just relax and say, "This place means peace". But to my husband one night she said, "Oh, Mr. Schumway, I do so want you and Mrs. Schumway to come and have dinner with me next week and go to the show my employees here put on every year and have for some time, and we invite guests and it is called Nellie's

Boarding House and I do so want you to see it and it's (side 2) a take-off on him and the lead is played by one of the all written and put-on by the employees at this time of year. We have about three hundred. And it's written and staged and the one who takes my part wears my old coat that I wear in the garden and my sun bonnet when I go poking around in the garden. And she said it's great fun, . So, I'm just so pleased to be able to do this. And to my astonishment she was so irrestible that Steve consented to come. He's really not interested in that sort of thing and he had no clothes to wear and his only suit was very ancient and the such different type of pants that he was quite embarrassed. But we went to the show and the guests that sat with us that writer that wrote the Ramona Pageant and Shirley Temple, the little girl, with her guards and her mother and her teacher sat in front of us. And she told me then that they came every year and they had a special house for Shirley Temple and how her mother was raising her to be a natural little girl and not a movie actress although she was so very . so screamingly And when the show came on, it was funny that we just couldn't do anything but laugh, and the side-splitting, it was so comical. And Mrs. Kaufman was very proud of this. Then I between Steve and Mrs. Kaufman and she used to invent reasons to get to come. She'd say, "This will get Steve to come up to

Lazy Acres". When I had promised her she had so greatly admired a dry arrangement I had made with the of the prickley yucca and put the dry pods in it and I had it there on the table, coffee table, and she so admired it. And I said, "Well, if you like it, I'd love to make you one". And she said, "Oh, would you do that, oh, how I'd love to have that". And she said, "Now if you do that, why, you let me know and then I want to remind you..." She said, "I'll be at Lazy Acres for the summer". And this was a place that she had redeemed from a plant place... the water came down. But she had made all the ferns growing along the bank and Lazy Acres was a woodland paradise and she had fixed over the old house there.

MS: Where was that Nina?

NS: It was just on the edge of Banning.

MS: Oh, I see.

NS: And it's still in there, and there was an iron gate they'd go through at Lazy Acres. And she was there in the summers. This entered very largely into her life later and I was to go on up there to write her book "Nellie's Boarding House". We to her in later years like . She wrote me a very beautiful says things Steve because she admired him very much. And I had been visiting with her later there and the man for the...or former editor for the Saturday Evening Post, which in those years

was tops in all the rising articles and fictional, and this man came and said at that time--her eyes were so bad, she was no longer taking meals in the hotel dining room, they were being sent over in a portable over, pot, and we ate at her house on the grounds which was a little ways from the . And she had--it was sort of a colonial cottage but it had stories and stairs from the living room, very enjoyable --and so she didn't like to eat in the dining room. So this man came and they had brought him over from the Inn and he said, "Mrs. Kaufman, I've come to get your story". And she had hadn't talked to me about writing her story. This was before my book had been published but I was writing it, . And she had said "I want you to write my story and we'll call it Nellie's Boarding House". And I said, "You will call it Nellie's Boarding House, it will be your story as told to me". And so she said to this man of the Saturday Evening Post, the former editor, "Oh, no" she said, "Nina is going to write it". She always called me Nina. "It's all arranged." And she stuck right to that. He said, "Well, we're very disappointed". "I had hoped to be able to ". And he looked quite but I was right there. She'd introduced us and said Nina is going to write the story, it's all arranged. So, when she went out of the room , he said, "I suppose it isn't so important who writes it as it is that it gets

written". And I said, "You may be sure that I'm doing all I can without being too cruel to get the story". But, I said, "But right now she isn't in condition, she's facing another operation for her eyes and she believes that this is going to be successful and that she will be able to see, and she doesn't want to think about anything and then when she comes back, why, we will talk more about the story, but she can't think anything about this matter now". So, I said, "You may be sure that I value this just as much as you do and to hear Nellie's Boarding House". But I said, "It must be told by Mrs. Kaufman". So later then she asked me to get a tape recorder and give it to her so that when she wakened in the night, she could talk into it and reminisce and of things, many things. Well, she had an humor. I've never seen anybody that had such a very irrisistible humor as Mrs. Kaufman.

MS: Was she able to do this for you? To talk into the tape recorder?

NS: I got the tape recorder. She was up at Banning. . She had the operation. It proved successful. She phoned to me and said, "Nina, come. Come on up and visit me. I can see you at last". And I came up and we threw our arms around each other and wept because of the joy. And she said, "I can really see you". And then, alas, her brother-in-law appointed her executor of his estate and he was a rich man but a very complicated estate. And

he had and she said, "I have to do his estate". She said, "Before I do

And she had to go to Los Angeles and rent an apartment and spend a solid month with the lawyers and papers and the most trying decisions to make. And the result was at this point, which is supposed to be a nervous disease, partially at least--I know nothing about it myself except what she told me, and, of course, it started through the loss(?) of her beloved grandson who had told her that he would always stand by her and he would take the Inn and take all this . This was her own son, was also killed in the war. And, of course, this was the , they say.

It started then.

MS: So, she was never able then to...?

NS: Never was able to do it. But then I was to come up that July and she had moved up to Banning, partially. But her housekeeper that she was to have at Banning was ill and couldn't come at the time she said, so she was a little late, which I have a letter from her written here when she said said she'd spent the day at Banning to get ready at later years. She thanked me for sending a man with the tape for her, but she hadn't yet gotten to use it. And then she said, "When you get up here, I will have some things ready next time". And within a few weeks, I believe it was--I would have to look back and check, but it was just a very short time--I got word that she

had passed and previous night and within an hour of the doctor's arrival. I guess the housekeeper was gone when she phoned for Dr. . When he got there, she was gone, just the way she had said of my Steve. (new conversation following distance on tape). ...on section thirty-five and my husband and Wilson Howell, who was a former rancher in the valley, and who knew the high country there, was always a great fan for owning the land but never being able to pay for it himself. So, he was one to get you started. And, so, we were always looking in those days for a quick place to get away from the heat, what we called a summer reserve, something that we could just go up back and forth quickly. And, of course, 1974 the Palms Pines Highway is not built then. And Wilson was a good friend, an old friend, and he was well educated but he wasn't much for action. He lived with his mother and they had a ranch down there. He didn't do very much ranching, but he was interested in everything. And so he told my husband that that was beautiful country up there that he knew of. He said, "Let's go up and explore that, and there is land for sale", which we knew that the Southern Pacific owned every other section of fifty miles on either side of the railroad. And they had advertised this in various ways. In early days they used to advertise it.

MS: The Indians owned one section and the...at first it was

the railroad?

NS: The Indians didn't own any reservation right there.

MS: I see.

NS: They owned the land at the Santa Rosa Reservation which was in the mountains but not right there. And this section thirty-five, the person, the only one that owned anything, was Authur Nightingale and Mrs. Nightingale. They had a little settlement up there that they later... they were living there then and she was a teacher in Los Angeles.

MS: How did you get up there from here?

NS: We had to go up through the pass and in around through Hemet and up the Idyllwild Road. And in the first place this had been a road that you couldn't pass, you know, you had to let all the traffic go up and all the traffic go down. That was earlier, but when we did this, we could pass. We had a way to get up but we had to go through that way and we had to go in through that cattle ranch and open seven gates and go through their pastures, shut each gate after us; and then we would come to Ohmstock Creek, they called it. Part of it was dry and there were puddles along too and very rocky and we straddle Ohmstock Creek and keep going up and up for some time. And then at a certain marker that was put there in old mining days, there was an asbestos mine on that side of asbestos mountain, and that was where later our homestead was on the desert side of asbestos mountain.

And this old asbestos mine had been worked occasionally but it was not enough value to it although it had times of being worked and they'd get fresh ideas about it for this and that especially when they started doing insulation with the short fiber asbestos. Anyway, then this old road went up a steep bank that floods had cut and made a terrible place, but you had to climb that bank and then you got on the old asbestos mine road, and then you followed that over into where Nightingale had built a track. And you took that through Nightingale, and then the boys made their own trail that a pick-up could follow into this section that was for sale by the Southern Pacific. We always just called it by its number, section thirty-five. We always called it thirty-five.

MS: Did you help pick out the exact spot where you rebuilt?

NS: Oh, my, I helped on everything. And then after Steve and Wilson found it we started going up there in the summer. And later when I wrote the advertising for and these were letters, and Bob Waters, who was the agent for the subdividers down here, was the one who got me to do this. And he asked me to write this whole story for one of the letters. That was really the only publicity that they had, were these letters that I wrote from... you know, this was something, a new way of advertising. And they were very, very appreciative. I got a very little for it but I didn't care because I was very interested in the whole thing. And we would camp there. Some

would just come up and bring their cots and we had a common stove made of iron things that they had at the ice plant that held a three hundred pound cake. And we built with rocks to a convenient height, put that on and then made a hole in one end and put a stovepipe up and we'd cook on it. There was enough room for everybody put on. And then we had a common table under a great big tarp. It was a beautiful place. I mean the trees and rocks were just magnificent, and we would be out there and some of our relatives, sometimes there'd be as many as nine, sometimes more at a weekend, and then we'd all go home and go to work. It gave us a breather in the summer. When we made this discovery of our homestead, we just off from thirty-five one morning picking a way through in our pick-up, and Steve was a master hand at driving in that kind of going, and he picked a way through the rocks and over the boulders and all to the desert side of asbestos mountain. And it was about two and a half miles away from the thirty-five camp, and when it became dark, we had our sleeping bags along and we just ate snacks, cold, and slept there and then went to . And that way we discovered the homestead that we later named the Tors . And, of course, Irene and Francis Rich who bought it from me in about 1963 or 1963, they never called it the Tors . They always called it the Schumway Ranch.

MS: Now I looked up the word tors having a couple of...

NS: Well, tors is a good old anglo-saxon work in the dictionary.

MS: I know that but it has two different meanings. What did the tors name mean to you?

NS: Well, in the dictionary it's a high, rocky peak, and that's what it was.

MS: Yes, high, rocky peak.

NS: And we were certainly in high, rocky peaks (chuckle).

MS: And did you name it, or did Steve name it?

NS: That's why we named it. And this was our own name for it, of course, and Francis always called it the Schumway Ranch. Then we had no road in. We had to build a road in from the highway. 74 was in the building by the time we filed on the homestead. It was in the building, but you could only go over it at your own peril. And they were not allowed, really, but if you could dodge the dump trucks and the road blocks and the dynamite blasts, you could get up there and over it, but you had to make way for all these work trucks and everything. We would sort of sneak up (chuckle).

MS: It was an engineering feat really, wasn't it?

NS: Oh, my, it's a wonderful piece...one of the finest pieces of engineering that has ever been done.

MS: And it really is called seven level hills...

NS: Eight. Eight switchbacks. I mean I know there's that

many. There might be more, but I know that there's one place below where you can count the switchbacks ahead and I've counted as many as eight. And then we had to build a road in to our section twenty-three, our homestead land. And we did that and my book is a story of the building of the road, the building of the first homestead cabin, which was just like a boxcar; and then we later, of course, built the house. And later after Steve was gone I furnished it and made a rendezvous there for all our crowd at Palm Desert that stuck together. And we had a wonderful group.

MS: You'd have parties and outings?

NS: Being as none of us drank, and this was quite unusual to have as many people in the group that were all of that one persuasion, and we had wonderful parties together. And, of course, May and Bob Hanson, they had money but all the love and goodwill in the world, and the rest of us all had...but the Tors became the place that you go for potlucks and for...and I entertained on occasion, but the first time it was used May Hanson, whom I had just recently met and gotten slightly acquainted with, and one who had four apartments on the corner, Mariam--her name excapes me but I'll just her Mariam, everybody will remember her--and they came over to see me. I had just met them both and they were quite socially involved, which I never have been much. And they were both sort of lacking, a little red-faced,

and they said, "We've come on a strange errand". And I said, "Well?" Well, they said it so unusual, were kind of embarrassed to ask it. "The fact is that both of us have small houses"--and Mariam, of course, lived in one of her four rentals, one of her apartments--and they said, "we both owe so many social engagements and we want to give a dinner and entertain all of the guests to whom we are indebted and pay our social debt". And May had been up to the Tors. I had taken her because I very seldom knew anybody long before I invited them to go up to my beloved Tors. So I had taken May out there and she was just, oh, she was just wild about it. And so, she'd told Mariam about it and she said, "What we would like to do is to borrow the Tors for a dinner party and we'll do all the work, you won't have to do a thing but come, and we'll just have everything prepared and it will most of it be cold. We might have coffee on your gasoline, we'd make coffee, but otherwise it will all be prepared and we will bring up card tables and we'll do every bit of the work. This is such a beautiful place and we would appreciate it so much". Well, I said, "Of course I'd be glad to do it but" I said, "do you think it's feasible because" I said, "you know I don't have a bathroom like these people would be used to and the road in is terribly rough and you won't have ice". "Oh, we'll tend to the ice, we've got bags full of ice". Because it was beginning to get

warm. And so they said, "All we ask is just to let us borrow your house for this dinner party and come". Well, of course, I tried to have things as best I could for them and that was all I could do. There was nothing else to do

But, oh, the dinner party was such a success and everybody was so enthused about it that it became just a place to say "oh, let's all go up to the Tors and have a potluck". And, of course, then Jean Bellow, who was Jean Harlow's mother, was one of our group and there were a number of poeple who no longer lived around that were part of it. Oh, we did have big groups up there for the Fourth of July. They'd all day or see, or some would hide, and some would just talk, and some would sleep and whatever, because they had two cabins besides my house. They could withdraw if they wished and then there was the annex where we slept as we did in every building.

MS: A marvelous retreat.

NS: But I acquired a big picnic table because when our church got a building of its own, it was a mess house at Camp Young, the officer's mess house. And one of our memebers, Dick Van , had climbed up in the attic to see if the building was a sound and some of the buildings were not for the men, but the offier's quarters are usually well built and this was very well built. We owned our lot in Indio and we had always had to meet at

the Women's Club or when that was taken over by the Army during the war days, why, we had to move in quarters upstairs over the bank. And I had acted no longer here, Jackie . We had to do janitor work and everything else for the church and we had a wild time trying to get moved up those steep stairs because there were just offices up above. But we got these rooms for our church services. Part of our group work, Edith and Dick Elliott, who had the Desert School at Idyllwild, and then her brother and his wife who were our soloist and pianist and all. And we had...

MS: What church was this?

NS: The Christian Science. And that's the first Christian Science Church in the valley. And when I got (end of Tape 2)

TAPE 3

NS: Got the brochure and they read it and were so delighted with it that they asked Bob if he wouldn't take them over to meet me. And he didn't want to do that because he knew that I was talking about selling, that the necessity was there. And I had written a brochure of my own finally in which I tried to present the charms of the Tors in a way that would appeal only to the highest class investor who would never try to make an ordinary subdivision and cut it up. And, of course, it wrung my heart to think of bulldozers coming in to the Tors. And this was the thing that I lived and prayed over for

months and months. So then, Frances and Irene were...

MS: They were very interested in

NS: ...and at the Desert Magazine Paula Kinney--she wasn't Kinney, McColloch--had talked them into staying long enough to show some of the small figurines in bronze and other things that Francis had with her. They'd been, I think to Arizona or somewhere where she'd done some work and for someone. Anyway, there they were and Paula had...they had told her about this brochure and said that they had left a note in my mailbox that I had on the highway. I never used that mailbox except for messages. I always went down after my mail, but friends would sometimes put in messages as they went by on the way to Idyllwild or Hemet or somewhere. And I only once in awhile look at it. Well, it was out of season so I was living...had come down to the desert. And one day my phone rang and this very sweet voice, the most gracious and lovely telephone voice that I've ever heard, asked me if I was Nina Schumway. And I said I was. And she said, "Well, I'm Irene Rich" and she said "Frances and I are here at the Desert Magazine and we are staying another day or two because Frances has agreed (abrupt ending of tape; nothing else on either side of this tape).

TAPE 4

NS: ...and then she said, "We've learned that you've just had a book published and we bought a copy and want you

to autograph it". "When would it be convenient, would you be able to get over and do this for us before we leave?" And it so happened that May Hanson had given invitations to about twenty-five of us ladies to celebrate the new Garden Hotel, which was a very different type of thing than we had had before in its construction and a very...well, just tops. And we were all quite excited about it. And so, I said, "I will going to lunch at the day after tomorrow". "And" I said, "I will be happy to stop on my way back and autograph your book and meet you". And so, at the luncheon when I announced that I had a date with Irene Rich right after lunch, as one body, the twenty-five chorused, "Oh, Irene Rich". "I always just loved her." So, I had this to tell Irene, which I did. I said, "That is a legacy that very few of us ever rate that 'I always just loved her' from a chorus of twenty-five women". And so, we met as friends. I have never had a meeting more congenial because I seemed to feel as if I knew them and they me. And so, after I had autographed their book and I talked and saw Irene's sculptures--they were all small but very exquisite--I said wouldn't you come over to my little house, Dune Drift, and have tea and let's talk some more. "Oh" they said, "we'd love to do that". So, we went over to Dune Drive...

MS: That's your house in Palm Desert?

NS: My house in Palm Desert, and we had tea. And we talked and we talked and we talked. And from then on whenever they were down here--they came sometimes to Palm Springs; there was a motel outside of the city a ways that would let them bring dogs. They had at that time about, I believe, it was eight poodles and they loved them dearly. Some of them were old and some were young and all kinds. They were great lovers of animals. So they usually traveled with one or two or three at least in the car and then the rest would be kept back to here. And they took me over there so I saw the motel. Later this was. They had come down and they called up and asked me if I would have dinner with them here in Palm Springs, and at that time they took me over to where all the dogs were.

MS: But, now, had there been any discussion at all about you selling Tors?

NS: No, no then. Nothing at all then. Then Irene decided to build a house right there close to the golf course in Shadow Mountain. They came back and forth quite a bit then. She said, "We'll always come and get you and take you over to see the house when we're done and we want you to go to dinner with us". So this happened over and over. Then she started the house right away. And one Sunday several months later after I had been with them a number of times, she called up and said, "Nina, I want you to come over today, the house is finished and I want to show it to you". "Frances isn't here" she said,

"she's over at Monument Valley". "Her friend John Ford is taking a picture, an Indian picture over there, and he phoned her to come over and he thought that she would like to do the head, to sculpture the head of the leading Indian actor". And she said "the name of the picture was 'She Wore a Yellow Ribbon' and it's taken in Monument Valley". "So she's not here, but I thought you could come over." Well, I had a rather early dinner engagement, but I said, "Well, I could come after church between my lunch and my dinner engagement for a little while". Because I was so eager to see her new desert home, and it was very charming. She just can fix anything so it's perfect. She's a very, very able artist. She can paint pictures and do things just highly desireable. And so, I had a good visit with her and was charmed with her house. And then from then on I never even thought about saying anything to them as a matter of fact to sell because I knew they'd bought over at . But when I started to write this brochure on my own and I was giving the Tors a new name for that. I didn't want to sell the name, the Tors, because that was a precious heritage. I belonged to my husband and me. And I gave it a new name and wrote this brochure which I still have a number of copies.

MS: What did you call it then?

NS: out of my thought.

MS: Well, we can talk about that later, but in your brochure,

the new brochure, you

NS: Wild Ridge! Wild Ridge. I named it Wild Ridge, and I described it in a way that I felt would evoke in the mind of a possible buyer, either a realtor or those to whom he would sell, pictures in their mind of something like a house (chuckle) that I had seen in Arizona. And I imagined they're maybe dividing it up into big areas that would do much bulldozing and building this type of a house that would fit into the landscape.

MS: Fit into the landscape and the environment, yes.

NS: Well, of course, we had blasted out a place in the rocks for our house originally, and I had to build onto the mountain when I built a little patio in order to have a place to lookout on down into the valley before we had any suitable windows in this first little cabin. But I had done that. I had built that myself to Steve's great pride and joy because I toiled as I had never expected to toil in my life with rock and cement. And my tennis shoes clinging on the side of a slope that only lizards would ever think of climbing on (chuckle). And I built that wall, a retaining wall, and then I filled it in to make a patio that I could sit out on and look down on the valley when I rested from my typewriter labors, because I was at this time the administrator for my father's estate.

MS: Well, now, when you got together with...

NS: So then, when I told Irene that I felt that I must sell

the place, that the boys weren't making good and that it looked as if I was going to have to sell it in order to be sure that I didn't wait so long that I was forced to sell and that I could pick and choose. And I was selecting my realtors with the greatest care. I also told her that I had never seen such a lazy lot as realtors were because I couldn't ever get them to walk and climb to where they could even see the boundaries of the place let along actually follow them. I had had it resurveyed. It had never been surveyed since the first government survey when they just marked it with an axe in a tree and the marks had almost disappeared from the that they had been put in. You couldn't tell what they were. So, I had gotten a surveyor through one of my nephews who was here in Palm Springs and he had come up and done the survey. And I could see the stakes he had put up and put red flags on and all so I could show them, at least give them an idea. I couldn't ever get them to the Tors. I didn't ever expect to.

MS: Well, did you get her up there to see it then?

NS: So, I told Irene how I felt about things and one day as I was over there--I can't remember...this wasn't the first time after I saw her house because I was there again--but I just was telling her what I was going to have to do and she was very interested in it and in my efforts. And she said, "Well, I suppose if I sold

such and such a ranch"--she named it, I don't recall--"I could buy it". Well, then she went right on talking and I never even thought about it again because it was so and if she sold this and she didn't even intend to sell it before. So I never paid any attention to it. And one morning after I had drilled the Diamond Drill well and gotten water, which I had to do entirely by myself..my nephew who I thought might--Lee, who is here in Palm Springs--who might be up there just for moral support and he had been up when I got this man to locate the spot for the water. And I obtained the services of this locater with his wand through the wonderful help of Burt Cavanaugh. I have never ceased--and I've told Burt since, I think I told him again at the last time I visited the Living Desert which was at one of their last meeting this year--I said, "I'll never getting over being grateful to you because without you I wouldn't have known how in the world to ever start to drill a well, let alone a Diamond Drill well which I'd only heard of". And I said I was nearer making up my mind to try to do such a wild thing. I actually argued with God about it for one year and said, "You know perfectly well, God, that I don't have the funds to risk on a well right then". But we had had a ten-year drought and my spring, which we had piped down to the house in Steve's time, had yielded water for almost twenty-five years. And gradually

and gradually it had gotten less and less and less. And in the hot sun this long pipeline down the channel of the stream bed and across the flats, as we called it, to the house, that water would dry up in the pipe.

MS: So, you knew in order to sell it you were going to...

NS: ...the only way you could drill a well in that country, which was all granite, solid granite, was with a Diamond Drill. And I had heard this but I thought, "How do you start, how do you know with six hundred and forty acres, where do you know to start any such thing". So I had heard that Burt Cavanaugh, who had a place about a thousand feet lower than mine but in a direct line, practically a direct line, that he had had a Diamond Drill well and he got an abundance of water. And I called him up. When I went down to the valley to Dune Drive, I called Burt Cavanaugh and I said I recalled that he was a date grower of the old school of date growers so that he--not the very earliest ones but the earliest in this part of the valley where he was situated, which, of course, now is Indian Wells, that was where I first met him and where I called--and he said, "Did you ever hear of witching for water?" And I said, "Oh, yes, my husband wrote to the government about that long years ago and they wrote and said it was just an old wive's tale". He said, "It's no old wive's tale, I can tell you that the man that I got for that can absolutely locate water and he can tell

you at just what depth you will get so many feet and just how much you will get at so many feet more that that and give you the whole story and mark the exact spot". "Oh" I said, "oh, would you get me his address?" "Oh, yes" he said, "sure, I'd be glad to". I said, "It looks as if I'm going to have to drill the well". But I still thought that I had my nephew to come in for moral support. When I got this information from Burt Cavanaugh, I was so excited and my nephew had been the man in charge of the--I always say rock of Gibralter, that was their trademakr (chuckle), you know, for insurance--and he was their man here in Palm Springs and was very busy because he had done a wonderful job and they had written him up in their magazine here with his family and all, made a whole issue of it with his picture on the cover of which I was very proud. And he said, "Well, auntie, I can help you on this". He didn't expect to help me financially though. But I had enough money in the bank to drill the well and that was about it. And so, I called him. I couldn't wait. I called his office and I said, "Oh, the most exciting thing". "I can tell how to drill this well exactly how much water I'll get, exactly where to drill it". And I get in touch with such and such a man who lives in Corona, and he works for the telephone people in Corona. And I can get in touch with him and he will locate a well for me, but it will only cost me fifty dollars for the location. That's all he'd charge." "Oh, my" Lee said, "well, oh

well, I must phone. I phone him right now". So he phoned him and made a date with him the following Saturday and to meet him at the foot of 74 at a certain gas station. It was a day in May. It was very cold. In fact, there was a...

MS: Do you remember about the year?

NS: ...it was about the coldest day I ever encountered. Sleet and gray clouds and sometimes rain, sometimes sleet. And this Jerry Lewis followed us up--no, it wasn't Lewis, well, I won't say what his name was, but I understand that he's had so much work that he doesn't want anymore and the company that he works for, the electric company, are objecting to his many side interests--anyway, he followed us up and at the gate he left his car and got into the station wagon with Lee and me. And as we got through the gate and across the wash, the first wash across, he said, "Stop". And we stopped and he got out and took out this piece--well, it was really a prepared piece of lumber, he told us afterwards how he made them.

MS: Like a dousing stick?

NS: It was his dousing stick but it wasn't a part of a peach branch or anything like this. It was a piece of lumber...

MS: He made it?

NS: He had made it and he carried it in a little case of flannel with the sticks, several of them in his hand, and told us how he made a little bend in them, and made a bend and had in his garage that he

could put them in and they'd dry that way, and it had a slight curve, rounded on the end. And he took this in his hand and walked slowly up the wash and we could see his lips moving, counting, one-two-three-four. Then suddenly he stopped and he gripped that stick just as tight...you could just see his knuckles turn white as he gripped it and he counted. And then he came back and he said if we get so many inches of water here in such and such a time at so many feet. If you go down another two or three hundred feet--he named it, I can't remember all this detail--you'll get so many inches. Well, Lee and I just looked at each other in utter dumbfoundedness, and then we went on. When we got to the house he said, "From here we'll walk". "Now is there someplace that you would prefer to drill the well?" And we said 'yes' if we drilled it in the stream bed of grapevine where we had the pipeline now, we could use the same big tank I had installed, a fifteen hundred gallon tank, and the pipeline that leads to it and from there to the house until we could do better because part of the pipeline was very old. Steve and I had had to buy secondhand iron two-inch pipe just to get started. We had so little to do with. And so, it was old and iron pipe, of course, rusts. We said if it was just below where the road, just an access road that we had built up to the place where we put in our spring and it was just a temporary thing. But when we'd got to

just below a little stable we had built with a little corral around it for saddle horses and later some goats that we had, when we got to this crossing, and we said this is the grapevine where we'd like to drill. So he said, "Stop right here and we'll walk now". Oh, on the way over he had stopped us at a little...just on the side of the hill he walked up and that was just about as we reached the cabin that we had called the roost because it was built right up on a rocky eminence. And he said, "Stop here". And we stopped and he walked up that hillside a little ways, counting, with his stick. And then he came back and said, "You could get a little water here, but it would hardly be worth developing and let's go on and see what we get over where you want to drill". So, we went on and then that was when. And he said, "well". He counted and then he stopped and we were following him just pop-eyed when he stopped and started to count. And Lee and I were right there beside him and everytime he would say anything significant Lee would take his elbow...we were so astonished, we just couldn't believe our ears. We'd never seen any such performance. And he said, "Well, at two hundred feet"--I believe it was, now it may not be exact. I've got it all down but my memory doesn't suffice--"you can get so many inches of water". "Then, if you go to four hundred feet, you can get so much water." "Oh" Lee said, "why auntie, why that for you?" "Two hundred feet, you could

fill your tank in an hour". "You can't ask anything better than that and you don't have to go to four hundred feet". "Oh" I said, "no, I know I could fill it in an hour, just think". Oh, I couldn't believe it. And I said, "Now, mark it carefully". "Put a pile of little stones right exactly on the spot where the drill is to go down." And he did and everytime that...so then Lee said, "Well"...he told us where we could contact the drillers and there's only one Diamond Drill in this whole region available and the company was at El Cajon. And Lee said, "I'll call them up tonight and make an appointment for you so that their agent can call upon you". And the agent was very prompt. He was over at Dune Drift the next day and we talked about it and I signed the contract. And he said we're on a job and we can't move until we get that finished, but we'll let you know when we can be there. And I made a very nominal sum that I would pay down to that I would keep my contract. It was only ten dollars, something like that, very small. And then I said, "I have a cabin where the men can stay and it has a small butane plate where they can cook and a little heater that they can get wood from my woodpile, but one thing I don't provide is there's cots there but no bedding and I do not provide bedding". "There's dishes and cooking utensils, but no bedding, so tell them they have to furnish their own bedding." And so, we kept in touch and at the time that

they said that they would notify me that they were coming out, I was up there although it was colder than Greenland. And I had a fire in the fireplace and the kitchen stove and was just a waiting in tense anxiety (end side one)

NS: ...the one that seemed to be the boss but he was just a boy, I wondered. He seemed to be so unconcerned and careless, and I siad..."Well' he said, "will you show us where the cabin is that we're to live in?" And I said, "Yes, sure I will, but" I said, "you brought grub?" "Hes" he said, "we brought grub". I said, "Did you bring any bedding?" "Bedding" he said, "never said anything about bedding, now". I said, "But I told your agent that you positively had to bring bedding". And I said, "You see how cold it is?" And he said, "No bedding". "Okay, got to go back and get it". And he wheeled the thing (see next page 66)

around right there in front of the house. He was as nonchalant as you ever could be. And I said, "Wait a minute, wait a minute. Where's the rig? Where's the well rig". "Oh" he said, "it's out on the highway somewhere there between--he named someplace I never heard of, it was just a spot on the road. He said the police had stopped him. I said, "The police, what's the trouble". "Well" he said, "they supposedly didn't get clearance". The police, you see, they said this thing...they have to drag this long thing, you see, and your're supposed to get clearance from the police. And he said, "I guess I didn't do it" and now they're in trouble. "Oh" I said, "My goodness sakes, when will they be here". "Oh" he said, "I just don't know, they didn't know either, but I got to go back and get the bedding". So he wheeled the thing around and was gone just like a shot as unconcerned about driving all the distance back to . Then late in the afternoon here he came in again just full speed, you know, and I dashed out to stop him. And I said, "What's happend now with the rig". "Oh" he said, "I guess they'll be along pretty soon. They're alright with the police and they'll be along pretty soon". And it was just getting dark when I heard this terrific roaring and this monstrous thing appeared over the hump that just getting to the house that you don't see down the road. And I dashed out and here they were and I stopped them because there was a sharp turn,

very narrow with a drop right down into a ditch. And I looked at those and had four gigantic wheels or tires like I never saw before and this long--looked like a telegraph pole--that they were dragging behind them besides a machine mounted on...

MS: All the well drilling rig, yes.

NS: ...oh, it was the most terrific thing. And I said, "Oh, stop, stop!" "Don't try to get around in the dark around that bend". I said, "You'll go over the edge as sure as can be. I don't see how you're ever going to manage", because there was a gigantic boulder pushed right out at that point and you always had to, even in a car, go carefully. I said I don't believe you can get the rig over there. "I don't know what we're going to do". "Oh, that's alright, we'll get in there, no problem." And you never saw people so short and so nonchalant, but they said, "Where's the cabin?" So, they went over to the cabin. I pointed to it right across the gulch to the brown cabin and said, "Over there". So, they went over there and I just thought I've got to be there on hand in the morning. I couldnt' sleep all night and I got up at daylight and it was awful, awful cold. I had a sheepskin lined coat that was a man's, an old one, and I look at my sheepskin coat now and think "if I'd only had that". I think I inherited it from Steve. And I went out and examined that road. I thought, "They'll never be able to make it". I went

in to get my breakfast and before I knew it I heard this roaring. And I got out just in time to see the end of the thing disappear around the curve and I was just absolutely thunderstruck. And I went out and examined the tracks and they were within, it looked like to me, a bare half inch, maybe it was an inch or two from that edge that were those treads of those monstrous tires. They were right on their way. They were over there. They were set-up in no time, and from that day forward--well, they had one breakdown when they couldn't work and they also had to go down after water. They had to continually pour water on this and they got that at the foot of the grade from some rancher down below 74 there. And I sat on that boulder from the time they went to work in the morning until they quit at night until they finished the job. I never once failed and I would get perfectly numb in the cold, but I was just so thrilled that I couldn't think of anything else.

MS: Does this story have a happy ending? How long did it take them to get the water? A week?

NS: Well, it's hard to go back to the amount of days and pin it down.

MS: Just several months?

NS: But it was less than ten days.

MS: Oh, it was?

NS: Oh, yes. But it's a very slow job. And then this water that comes out in this drainage pipe thing is sludge, you

know, mixed with the ground, granite, and it's just a grey sludge keeps pouring out and pouring out and pouring out. And they keep pouring in and it pours out the other way, and it was hard for me to tell what was what. And what I wanted to do was to be sure just how many feet. I wanted to see if it was absolutely right and he was. When one of the fellas said, "Well, she's beginning to run clear", or something like that, I looked and saw that actually the sludege was less thick. There was more water with it, and more water with it clearer and clearer. And I asked them about the feet. They had a measurement thing all the time. Exactly like he said, you'll strike water at that much feet. You go down to such and such a feet, you're going to have so much inches, and when they got to the inches that he had told me, it was pouring into the tank and I never heard such a blessed sound in my life as when that water began to pour into the tank. You could just hear it, you know, and the tank was practically empty and this water pouring into the tank with this back of it, why, it's just was the most thrilling a moment of my life up until that time, I guess.

MS: Then you knew you had water to sell it?

NS: And since I had no phone there was no way to warn me. One morning early Frances and Irene drove in and I was rejoiced to see them and it was their first visit to the Tors. As you entered the entry room through these doors from the side of the little front porch, pull the

latch string up--Steve had made a latch string, an old fashioned type thing--and here was Frances and Irene and I took them in and I had to warn them as I always had to warn guests--everybody's gaze went immediately out through our twenty-four foot stretch of window across the desert clear over to as far as Shaver's Summit, which is now Summit, well, you could see that far over all the mountains and desert--and I had to warn them as they came in and they went in slowly and looking and looking and looking. Frances was saying, "perfect, perfect, perfect". And this was just what it was to me was perfect, perfect, perfect. And then they looked around and looked at everything in the house and sat down and began to talk. And within an hour Irene said, "Well, Nina, if you're asking still the same price that you mentioned the other day, I believe we'll buy your Tors". I wouldn't really have to sell that ranch she said it sort of aside to Francis. I said, "Well, you haven't seen it, let me show it to you". "Oh" she said, "we've seen enough". "Well" but I said "do you mean it, do you mean it?" "Why, yes" she said, "yes, yes". And later Frances told me that she was almost as surprised as I except that she knew her mother as she said this is the way she will do things. She will suddenly see something or understand something and know that it is to be and does it right then and there. And Irene told me later that she hadn't actually known when she started

that she was going to do this or say this, but then she knew it as soon as she said it. And I was just in a daze and it happened so fast. They left and I couldn't do anything I was in such a state of excitement and thrilled. I said to Irene, "It's a miracle, absolutely a miracle, nothing else explains it". Because Francis had indicated that they would live there, that they would keep it intact and that she would work up there. And later she told me that they would never sell it, that it was to be kept as an institution.